

Campuses at a Crossroads

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Accelerated growth drives FSU, FAMU and TCC's new construction and plans for expansion

Higher Education Reaches Even Higher

Tallahassee's crossroads of higher learning has reached its own crossroads, but remains entwined with local and regional economic development.

By Jason Dehart

Mark Bertolami wouldn't mind being voted off the island. In fact, he'd appreciate it very much.

"One of the things we're dying to do is get off campus," said Bertolami, director of facilities planning and campus master planning for Florida State University.

He's talking about the fact that the university's maintenance department is smack-dab in the middle of the 450-acre campus. It's four acres of parking lots, trucks, offices, warehouses and a refueling station nestled among a bustling student population of 40,000. Bertolami thinks it would be great if he could up and move somewhere else.

"It makes no sense to have a maintenance facility in the middle of campus," he said.

If his wish comes true, valuable land would be open to redevelopment at a landlocked university that is bursting at the seams with growth.

"By and large, our campus right now is pretty much packed," he said. "There's just no vacant land left. We either have to tear down and rebuild more densely, move things off campus or buy more land."

Today, the FSU main campus is bustling with redevelopment and construction. A \$500-million construction program is under way, which includes new parking garages, classroom buildings and residence halls. The program is part of the university's master plan, which includes construction of a new and larger intramural field west of the Seminole Golf Course, among other projects slated for the so-called "Southwest Campus" north of Lake Bradford Road.

So much construction is going on that of the nine large construction cranes towering above the city, seven currently are being used at FSU. It's an accomplishment President T.K. Wetherell is proud of.

"We broke ground on the new Chemistry and Life Science buildings, and we completed the final phase of Medicine, the first phase of Psychology and a new classroom building," Wetherell said in his fourth "State of the University" address last September. "Two new residence halls and parking garages are also under construction. Construction will start this fall on the Materials Research Building. That's just a small part of the half-billion dollars in construction that's reshaping this campus."

Meanwhile, the search for more room also is taking place across town at Tallahassee Community College. President Bill Law said his college is thriving, and he is looking to use more efficiently the space he has.

"We're bounded too, like FSU," he said. "Our campus (is bordered) by Pensacola Street, Tennessee Street, Appleyard Drive and railroad tracks. Two or three good things are happening that will take a lot of pressure off us over time. First and foremost, when we create the new health education center, that will free up enough space on campus that's almost the same as getting another building."

At the same time, Florida A&M University continues its steady growth – the only difference being they have more land to do

it in.

“FAMU has got plenty of property to grow on,” said Tallahassee Mayor John Marks, whose parents went to FAMU. “Toward Orange Avenue, they’ve got I don’t know how much of that land, but they chose – which I think was not a bad idea – to grow toward town. But I think they’re growing toward Orange Avenue because they’re finding the center of town is getting larger. So now, they’re going to put a new development and research school out toward Orange Avenue. They just put a huge fitness facility across Osceola going toward Orange. They’re going to begin to use that, and they’ve got some dormitories out there, so I think FAMU has land to expand on.”

The Epitome of ‘Smart Growth’

Ask TCC President Bill Law, and he’ll say his public-safety and health-care college is healthy in a variety of ways.

“We have been by far the fastest-growing college in Florida for the two previous years,” he said, although this year’s enrollment appeared to be leveling out with a population increase of 1.5 percent. “We’re not exactly sure what’s causing it to plane over; we know that community colleges are still subject to the sort of counter-cyclical economic trends. When people can work, they tend to stop out of school or take fewer courses. And we know that the unemployment rate is very low. So that’s part of it.”

Meanwhile, the academic growth at FSU has increased in strength. And that is essential, given that Florida’s 11 public four-year universities have a mandate from new Florida Gov. Charlie Crist.

“During Gov. Crist’s inaugural message, he said Florida can’t be an economic leader unless every child receives a world-class education, and that includes colleges,” said Lee Hinkle, vice president for university relations at FSU. “Our job is to make sure that they get a great education. He is pointing out that our colleges and universities are national leaders, and we are poised to be an economic leader.”

While FSU’s infrastructure continues to grow, the academic offerings for its approximately 40,000 students are expanding as well. Students in 16 colleges can choose from more than 300 degree programs, with many – including physics, chemistry, oceanography, statistics, ecology and evolutionary biology, meteorology, political science, psychology, sociology, criminology, information, creative writing, public policy, business, law and the arts – consistently ranking among the top 25 in the nation.

Leveraging all of these strengths with significant new investments in research and graduate education, FSU also has launched an ambitious initiative, “Pathways of Excellence,” to place the university alongside the most academically elite institutions in the nation.

As Wetherell explained it in his 2006 address, “Pathways of Excellence” is a five-year plan to hire 200 senior faculty members in interdisciplinary clusters of five to eight people based on an academic theme or research area.

“We committed ourselves to the specific plan of becoming one of the top research and graduate education institutions in the United States,” Wetherell said. “Many of those new faculty members will be national and international leaders in their field. That’s going to build our faculty ranks by nearly 20 percent over today.

“No other university is saying to current faculty, ‘We’re going to hire hundreds of top-notch faculty members in the next five years – and who they are and what they teach is up to you,’” he said. “You come up with the ideas for broad, interdisciplinary approaches. You decide what the clusters and academic themes should be. You nominate the hires. You evaluate them. And central administration will provide \$100 million to pay for it – with no cost sharing by your college.”

It’s an approach that is creating a buzz around the country. A recent report from Harvard recommends a “Pathways”-type approach for the Ivy League school.

“That great university has examined its academic and hiring practices and realized they were coming up short,” Wetherell said. “They want to cut through barriers. They need to look at Florida State. We’re already at work doing what they’re just now proposing.”

The Economics of Higher Learning

Julie Harrington, director of FSU's Center for Economic Forecasting and Analysis, FSU Vice President Hinkle and TCC President Bill Law – who also is chairman of the Tallahassee/Leon County Economic Development Council – are quick to point out the various ways the three universities contribute to the local economy and the community at large.

“You take away the universities, you take away a lot of high-wage jobs, and high-wage jobs produce people who buy consumer goods like refrigerators, higher-end cars and furniture,” Hinkle said. “They go out to dinner, they take in cultural events, and those things would be gone if you didn't have the universities and the community college here.”

In the case of TCC, that contribution is a little more evident in the daily lives of thousands of Tallahassee residents.

“Heaven forbid you should get in a car accident on the way home today, but if you do, you will likely have five or six TCC graduates serve you before you get to the first baccalaureate or more, trained person,” Law said. “The police (officer) who responds is going to be a TCC grad, the EMT who takes you to the hospital is going to be a TCC grad, the people in radiology who take a picture of your fractured leg are TCC grads, the nurse at the back door where they drop you off is going to be a TCC grad, and then there will be a doctor who will diagnose you.

“I'm only making up an anecdote, but it's darn near true,” Law said. “Think about it. That's what we're doing every darn day – turning out people to do just that. And I'm delighted with that. Nobody asked us to train doctors, but they did ask us to train well-trained policemen, well-trained EMTs, well-trained nurses, well-trained radiologist technicians, and we're doing a good job. Eighty percent of the jobs in health care are below the baccalaureate level. So that's why we put such a premium on this, because our community needs it.”

The universities provide jobs in other ways. FSU's booming construction utilizes many local contractors, Hinkle said.

“If you look at the construction on the FSU campus, you don't see construction like that anyplace else in Leon County,” she said. “That is employing a lot of people who do everything from architectural, engineering, interior design, plumbing, electrical . . . all kinds of jobs. Look in the phone book at all the trades. They're all doing business with FSU.”

Harrington said FSU contributes significantly to the local – and state – economies, in terms of work force training and dollars generated.

“FSU provides analytical and leadership skills to the work forces of both the public and private sectors,” she said. “The primary benefit the private sector receives from FSU is enhanced worker productivity. Employers report that college graduates have better communication skills and are better able to use technology. This leads to higher worker productivity, higher firm profit, and in turn, higher salaries for workers.”

Harrington said that in 2004, Professor Mark Bonn of the FSU College of Business conducted an economic impact study to find out how the university was putting bread on the table. He found out that more than 873,000 visitors came to FSU in 2004, and those visitors spent \$252 million in Tallahassee. In addition, \$196 million in wages was generated, 13,251 jobs were supported, and more than \$18.2 million in hotel/motel room revenue was counted.

In addition, FSU is perhaps the largest utility customer in Tallahassee, Harrington said. In 2004, the university paid the city \$17.2 million in electricity fees. In all, 30 percent of city electric service revenue is generated by FSU, FAMU and TCC.

Meanwhile, FSU's research and development programs are well known for being strong economic engines with wide-ranging impact. For the first time, FSU enrolled more than 40,000 students during the Fall 2006 semester, and its operating budget has grown to more than \$1 billion. FSU faculty also brought in a record \$190 million in research grants during the 2005-2006 academic year, and the National High Magnetic Field Laboratory recently received an \$11.7-million grant to build the world's next-generation research magnets.

“FSU generates income and spending, such as research grants and awards, net of state general revenue and Lottery funds that would not otherwise occur,” Harrington said. “This research activity, often done in cooperation with the private sector, leads to the development of new technologies and products that generate discoveries and spin off entire new industries, employment and income.”

One of the best examples of this is Taxol, a cancer-fighting drug synthesized by FSU scientists in 1993 after 22 years of

painstaking research and development.

“FSU’s license for producing Taxol was one of the largest licenses ever held by a university,” Harrington said. “To date, Taxol revenue has topped \$200 million.”

Isn’t It Ironic . . .

While the universities are booming, and the city is doing well from having them here, their presence hasn’t exactly drawn big private-sector industries. Mayor Marks said historically, there hasn’t been a need to attract these kinds of businesses because the local economy was, and is, driven by the universities, along with state government.

“There was no real need, because we were fully employed, highly educated, and we had state government along with the universities to drive the economy,” Marks said. “And as long as we had those, there was no need to actively recruit or actively seek private-sector business. Or if we did, we would only attempt to get those businesses that we really, truly wanted in this community. And we were able to be choosy and picky about the kinds of private-sector businesses in this community, whereas other communities might not be as selective.”

However, there’s a big drawback to that philosophy.

“I think we are at a significant disadvantage because we don’t have a major or a large or a significant private-sector presence in our community,” Marks said.

When former Gov. Jeb Bush sought to downsize and privatize some state government jobs, Marks said it demonstrated the need for greater economic diversity in Tallahassee.

“Now, to those government workers who may have lost their jobs as a result, that was not a good sign, but to those of us who believe that we needed to recruit, or encourage private-sector businesses, that was a wake-up call, in my opinion,” he said. “With that in mind, we’d better start looking at the private sector to drive our economy. Or to be a significant (driver). Government will always be the primary driver, and the universities will always be a significant driver in our economy, but we had better start diversifying our economy and recruiting businesses – and we have done that.”

Turbocor and Torrey Pines

Working together, the city and the universities – along with the Tallahassee Chamber of Commerce and the Tallahassee/Leon County Economic Development Council – recently scored a big win in attracting big business, and one very narrow loss.

“Turbocor is one of our great successes of the last year,” said TCC President and Economic Development Council Chairman Law.

“I think that the opportunity that we had with Danfoss Turbocor and the Torrey Pines opportunity last fall really awakened the city and county to the fact that they need to do a better job of working with the Chamber of Commerce and working with the Economic Development Council and the universities to prepare for these kinds of opportunities,” said FSU Vice President Hinkle.

Danfoss Turbocor, formerly of Montreal, manufactures high-tech compressors for heating, ventilation and air conditioning units. Luring them to Tallahassee took a lot of work over a short period of time, Law said. A building had to be financed and constructed, and a new training program had to be established locally to prepare new employees for work. The latter was TCC’s job.

“Literally a year ago, we sat and cemented the deal,” he said. “But TCC took a vacant position and said, ‘We will designate this position as a point of contact to design and implement all the necessary training, working with Turbocor’s HR and training division.’ We didn’t know that much for an area we knew nothing about – high-end manufacturing. But we put together this training group, and they are up and running today as we speak.”

That kind of initiative-taking helped bring Danfoss Turbocor here, Law said.

“I’ve got a position that’s working to design and implement the training in support of Turbocor locating in this community,”

he said. “Not an earth-shaking commitment, but not an inconsequential commitment at the same time. We’re working very, very closely with the city in a lot of areas to do with economic development. We have as many as 500 manufacturing jobs coming over the horizon in the Tallahassee area over the next couple of years.

“The nice part is, once you get to that level, you can attract more to come in because you have a training infrastructure in place so the next company knows it can get trained workers,” Law said. “The good part is we are growing from within – (precision-parts manufacturer) Global CNC is a group that developed in support of Turbocor. (Military-electronics manufacturer) General Dynamics, we’re making a big pitch for a big expansion of what they do, and Benedict Engineering locally has some things coming over the horizon that could lead to additional manufacturing.”

Marks said the key to this success is each party in the relationship knowing their individual roles and calling out for help when necessary.

“Chambers (of commerce) and EDCs go out there and find the kinds of businesses that might be interested in this community,” he said. “Government’s responsibility should be to provide infrastructure, circumstances and conditions for those businesses to come to this community, and to survive, thrive and grow in this community. We should make sure there is a good police department, fire department, drainage, schools, airport, cultural activities, parks and recreation. That’s what we do, and we do a damn good job of it.”

Early on, though, Marks said it seemed that the roles were blurring slightly.

“The Chamber was trying to do some of that stuff I do and I was trying to do some of the stuff that the Chamber was doing,” he said. “And I said, ‘Wait a minute, you do your job well, let me do my job well, and if I need your assistance I will call upon you and if you need me, call me.’ And that’s exactly what happened with Turbocor. The Chamber went out, and the EDC, and they found Turbocor. And then they came to me and said, ‘Mr. Mayor, we need you to fly to Montreal so you can convince these people that Tallahassee is where they need to relocate.’ The Chamber can’t do that, but I can. And that’s what I did. Lo and behold, we got Turbocor.”

However, the city is learning that a great partnership with the universities and development councils only goes so far. Case in point: the recent failure to lure the Torrey Pines Institute for Molecular Studies, an innovative leader in biomedical science.

“Torrey Pines would have been fabulous for us,” Marks said. “The same thing happened with Torrey Pines, but we missed Torrey Pines on another issue. We didn’t have enough money in the pot. St. Lucie offered them more money, which we were not capable of doing.”

Hinkle said it was “really tough” for FSU to lose Torrey Pines.

“They were doing work that would have blended so well with so many of our programs on campus,” she said. “It would have benefited us and it would have benefited them as well so it was a good synergistic move. And the truth of the matter is, St. Lucie didn’t have nearly the educational component that we had but we weren’t able to come up with the money.”

Law said it was “fun” to watch the universities and the city negotiate with Torrey Pines.

“From my EDC perspective, when we were negotiating to try and get Torrey Pines to locate here . . . it was exciting for me to see the intersection of us trying to bring high-quality jobs to town and . . . FSU’s strategic plan,” he said. “That was the part that was an eye-opener. They have ‘Pathways of Excellence,’ and they got a new game plan: ‘We’re going to hire clusters of the world’s best.’ To try and get centers that create where the whole is greater than the sum of its parts. And when I saw them and the Torrey Pines people talking, I saw the intersection of that.

“In the end, we didn’t have enough money on the table,” Law said. “But the idea is, a lot of people in the community saw what we could do when we got to everybody’s strengths rather than arguing about who’s paying for the police on game day. Both the city and county worked really hard to try and make that deal work. I was stunned by the sophistication of FSU’s thinking and how much they were willing to put into the deal.”

“FSU put a huge amount of money on the table,” Hinkle said. “We were able to guarantee (Torrey Pines) several million dollars in funding for additional faculty. We were also able to provide them with some space near the magnet lab where they might be able to develop some cooperative working relationships. But we sort of went out on a limb and put some money in place that was going to make it a stretch for us.

“We get money from the state, and that is earmarked for particular purposes – either construction or buildings or utilities or pay for faculty members,” she said. “They don’t just send us over a big pot of money and say, ‘Here’s an extra few million

dollars, do with it what you want.’ ”

So what conclusion was drawn from that experience?

“We need some private investment in our community. It can be done,” Law said. “We have to find other ways to bring private money into that nexus of university-city-county-EDC. If we’d seen some additional private dollars, then we would have been successful on that venture. But we don’t have a huge private sector – we don’t have a Harris Corporation, or Grumman or Martin Marietta or those kinds of things . . . It’s not like we don’t have anything, we just ran out of time, started late. But that’s one of the things we came away with: We can’t do it all with government dollars. There won’t be enough for the blockbuster projects.”

Marks said Law is absolutely correct.

“But also part of that is we have got to have the correct mindset and we are on a learning curve on how to recruit private-sector businesses, because we’ve never had to do it before,” he said. “We have got to build the resources to do that. We never did it before, and we’re learning. Are we completely prepared? No. But we are a heck of a lot better prepared than we were before.”

Part of those preparations may call for setting up a special fund that can be activated when necessary, Hinkle said.

“What the Chamber has been preaching – and I’m a big advocate of the kinds of things the Chamber is doing – they’ve been advocating putting a fund in place so that when you have these opportunities, you don’t have to scurry around trying to find crumbs to throw to these folks,” she said. “We need to have a fund in place, both cash and an opportunity to do some expedited permitting and things like that, so when you get an opportunity you don’t have to go begging the city or the county to help you woo a strong economic development opportunity to town.”

However, there always will be a role for elected officials to play. Hinkle said there needs to be a greater willingness on the part of elected leaders to push for economic development.

“We have people on the current County Commission who we think are more willing to work together to promote economic development,” she said. “That should make the process more effective.”

Big Changes in Store

New classrooms, new housing, new athletic fields and a new health education center are coming to a campus near you.

By Jason Dehart

In the near future, dirt will be moved on the latest Tallahassee Community College endeavor – a state-of-the-art health education facility to teach a new generation of local nurses, EMTs and other health care professionals.

The new center is but one of the many projects going on right now in the Education Corridor.

Ghazvini Health Education Center

Although still on the drawing board, the new Ghazvini Health Education Center will be located across town from TCC’s main campus, near the employee parking of Tallahassee Memorial Hospital.

“The No. 1 priority for facilities continues to be the creation of our new health education center,” said Bill Law, president of TCC. “It will be a teaching facility . . . we’re designing nursing labs, respiratory labs, these sorts of things.”

A generous land gift from the Ghazvini family, prominent local developers, will be leveraged into cash to pay for the back-end

costs of the new center, Law said.

“They gave us parcels, valued and appraised at \$2 million, that they own in the community that are not contiguous – land they had acquired at different times,” he said. “But they identified a number of parcels that were then donated to the college with the understanding that we’d hold them and at some future date sell them. That will generate cash, and that cash is eligible to be matched by the Legislature. So our plan is to . . . use this money at the end of the construction process to make sure we have the state-of-the-art equipment and any last-minute issues that come up as far as construction.

“So we’ll have \$4 million flow into the project in the final stages, which will allow us – in fact, my fondest hope is that when it’s all said and done – we can create some kind of endowment that allows us every year to have money coming in to help buy state-of-the-art equipment.”

Naturally, with such a donation, it was easy to come up with a name for the new facility, Law said.

“We already have a name for it: the Ghazvini Health Education Center.”

FSU’s Big Projects

FSU currently is in the middle of an ambitious, half-billion-dollar construction program on the main campus. New buildings include a \$53.9-million Chemistry Building; an 88,000-square-foot, \$22.6-million classroom building; a \$17.8-million Materials Research Building next to Innovation Park; a 981-car, \$12.7-million parking garage on the corner of Call and Macomb Streets; a Psychology Building on Call Street; and a new, \$12.8-million Student Success Center next to the Student Life Building.

One other important project is the new Marine Science Research and Training Center – essentially a swimming pool complex – to be located in the university’s “Southwest Campus” landholdings west of the Seminole Golf Course. This facility replaces the old pool that existed for many years on campus. FSU President T.K. Wetherell decided to move the pool off campus to make more classroom space.

“He made the tough decision,” said Mark Bertolami, director of facilities planning and campus master planning. “He recognized the value of the land for something other than a pool. Now we’re building a new classroom building there; a classroom building is more important.”

Another facility moving off campus is the intramural fields, which also are relocating to the Southwest Campus.

“Campus Rec came to us and said, ‘We want to move off campus,’” Bertolami said. “So we have chosen to assign a piece of land that’s 115 acres, west of the golf club. It’s going from four fields to 20 fields and is fully funded by the students themselves.”

In addition, the old DeGraff Hall dormitory, built in the 1950s and accommodating 150 students, was demolished. It makes way for a new residence hall, now under construction, that will accommodate 706 students in double-occupancy, suite-style rooms. The cost of that project is \$36 million. Another new two-building residence complex, Wildwood Hall, will provide an additional 706 beds. Expected to open in August, the dorm is located at the corner of Wildwood Drive and Jefferson Street. Landis Hall and the Johnston Building also are being renovated.

“We have been renovating our oldest buildings over the past 15 years,” said Rita Moser, director of student housing.

Off-Campus Housing Growing

With 60,000 students attending both universities and TCC, living space is a precious commodity in Tallahassee. One company, Student Housing Solutions, is working to increase housing opportunities by adding two new townhome-style condominiums to its current listings.

“I think housing is necessary, and more and more students are wanting to live off campus,” said David Marshall of SHS

Realty, Student Housing Solution's in-house real estate company.

Baldwin Park is an 82-unit condominium complex located at Jackson Bluff and Capital Circle Northwest, just five minutes from FSU.

"That's under construction, and units will be available in fall 2007," Marshall said.

Another townhome-style condo project SHS is working on is Timber Ridge, which also is five minutes from FSU.

Why should students buy instead of rent?

"They can enjoy some appreciation, the money goes toward home ownership, and there are tax benefits," Marshall said.

Student Housing Solutions has been in business since the 1990s.

College Avenue Facelift

There's no question that College Avenue needs some sprucing up. It used to be FSU's de facto frat row, but in recent years the street has gained a reputation for being a gritty, dirty place. And that's not a good situation to be in for a corridor that links downtown Tallahassee with Westcott Hall, the iconic and symbolic entryway to FSU.

"There are a lot of problems with College Avenue, and they are mainly aesthetic," said FSU's Bertolami. "It's better now than two years ago – you'd find yourself hopscotching around broken bottles and garbage cans and cars parked illegally. A fairly unpleasant and difficult avenue to walk.

"Obviously there were some frats there, more than now, and they were responsible for some of (the mess)," he said. "We had some absentee landowners who did nothing, and basically College Avenue was in some serious disrepair."

But that's changing. The city is in the early phases of designing a revitalization scheme for College Avenue. Mayor John Marks said the city and FSU are on the same page about the importance of such a project.

"That has been a pet project of both mine and (FSU President T.K.) Wetherell's," Marks said. "Dr. Wetherell wants to do it, but I agree with him wholeheartedly that it is an actual, physical corridor that can connect the university with the town, and we need to do some things to make that happen."

One of the first simple things the city did for its part was to eliminate all parking on the street.

"That was by design, to influence and encourage more activities between FSU and downtown, to encourage people to walk that corridor and utilize that corridor," Marks said. "The second part of that is we're going to have to look at those who own properties along College Avenue . . . We may have to encourage them in some fashion, whether through government incentives or through private-sector incentives, I don't know, to do something with the buildings (there)."

One landowner in particular said he has been ready for years to move forward with improvements. Prominent Realtor Chip Hartung said he and a business partner bought an old fraternity house with a plan to eventually build townhouses or a condo there.

"Our site was about three-quarters of an acre," he said. "Shortly after we bought it, we met the owner of the adjacent parcel, and collectively we determined that by assembling our parcels, we could do a much nicer project. These parcels contained very old houses and dilapidated frat houses. All three of us are FSU grads, and all three believe that College Avenue itself was in deplorable condition. . . . We felt like before we could improve our property, FSU and the city needed to make a commitment to improving College Avenue."

Hartung said he learned that Wetherell was of the same opinion.

"He took it upon himself to clean up the section between Westcott (which is on Copeland Street) and Maccomb, where he took

parking off the street and really enhanced that section,” Hartung said.

Hartung said he and his partners’ property is between Macomb Street and Martin Luther King Street. They own just under two acres, and the property goes from College to Park Avenue. Most of that land currently is being used for parking; two old buildings already have been demolished.

However, Hartung said, he doesn’t want to start building anything new until the city does something with the stormwater drainage pipes under the street.

“One of the major inhibitors of us developing the site, aside from the poor character of the street, is the fact that the stormwater piping is deficient and won’t handle water from a redevelopment,” he said. “The city has been studying that for quite some time and have determined for some time that that section needs repair and replacement.”

The plans Hartung has seen call for an overall facelift of the street, to include new lighting, landscaping, storm drains and 10-foot-wide sidewalks on each side. But it’s not happening fast enough, he said.

“It’ll probably take three or four years to finish the project,” he said. “The only thing that has happened is the city has taken parking off College Avenue. We’re at the wait-and-see stage, unfortunately.”

Economic Development Outlook

Revisiting the Educational Corridor

By Dr. Bill Law

The neighborhoods and business districts dominated by people who study or work at Florida State University, Florida A&M University and Tallahassee Community College have seen generations come and go. The constant is that our institutions of higher learning continue to drive community development, and currently we’re seeing some real growth.

Today we are in a very different position regarding notions of how this community can support its institutions so that they can, in turn, support the community. In the education corridor, the dialogues and experiences are working wonderfully to create this relationship. The best example is the stunning work at Innovation Park, where FAMU and FSU have exciting new developments under way. I think there are six separate projects out there – it’s been decades since we had that many at once.

We’ve also made the dialogues between institutions of higher learning and the Economic Development Council much more strategic. We help each other. Danfoss Turbocor is a good example, because this community has what the company needed: science, engineering and hourly workers. Turbocor did not land in Tallahassee due to luck.

The corridor could be redeveloped. It’s ripe for mutual planned support for our universities, given the area’s very low levels of owner-occupied housing. We could have green-space recreation, and we ought to encourage apartments that allow amenities for students. Redevelopment would enable us to handle transportation more effectively, encourage quality development and protect the neighborhoods. We’re not quite to critical mass on that dialogue, but we’re getting there.

As an economic-development driver, students bring a lot of money and spend a lot of money. There are some infrastructure issues, but you don’t have to incentivize the way you do with jobs in other locations.

The corridor is one to keep your eye on.

Movers and Shakers in the Education Corridor

T.K. Wetherell

President of Florida State University

Described on the university Web site as a “high-energy, student-oriented” president, Wetherell is the first FSU alumnus to serve in the position. He is a veteran college administrator and former state legislator, and since he came on board in 2003 has led FSU in its most extensive construction program to date. This includes three new residence halls, a classroom building, food service, parking garages, research facilities and an alumni center. Also under his watch, during the 2005-2006 fiscal year, FSU recorded its best research-grant year to date – with funding totaling \$190 million – an almost 18-percent increase over the previous year.

Bill Law

President of Tallahassee Community College

Now in his 19th year as a community college president, Law is described as a passionate advocate for education with a strategic vision for success. After serving previously at Montgomery College outside Houston and Lincoln Land Community College in Springfield, Ill., he became president of TCC in March 2002. Since then, he has dedicated himself to issues such as work force development, student success and retention, community outreach, and the first-ever TCC Foundation Capital Campaign – a drive to raise \$10 million for scholarships and other projects to strengthen the college. Law has had great success in bridging the academic and business communities: The “TCC 250” program increased enrollment in academic health care programs and an emphasis on the arts led to the opening of two on-campus galleries. Success also is credited to his leadership role on behalf of the Council on Community College Presidents.

James Ammons

President of FAMU

FAMU graduate James Ammons was named president in February after a lengthy search for a new chief executive. Ammons, the chancellor of North Carolina Central University in Durham, graduated from FAMU in 1970 with a degree in political science, earned a master’s degree in public administration in 1975 and his doctorate in government in 1977. He started teaching in 1977 as an assistant professor at University of Central Florida in Orlando, then in 1983 came back to FAMU as an assistant professor in political science. In 1993 he became a full professor, then was appointed provost and vice president for academic affairs in 1995. In 2001 he left FAMU to become president of North Carolina Central University. Ammon’s appointment is expected to be ratified by the FAMU Board of Trustees on March 8.